

SUPPLEMENT OF INTRIGUE

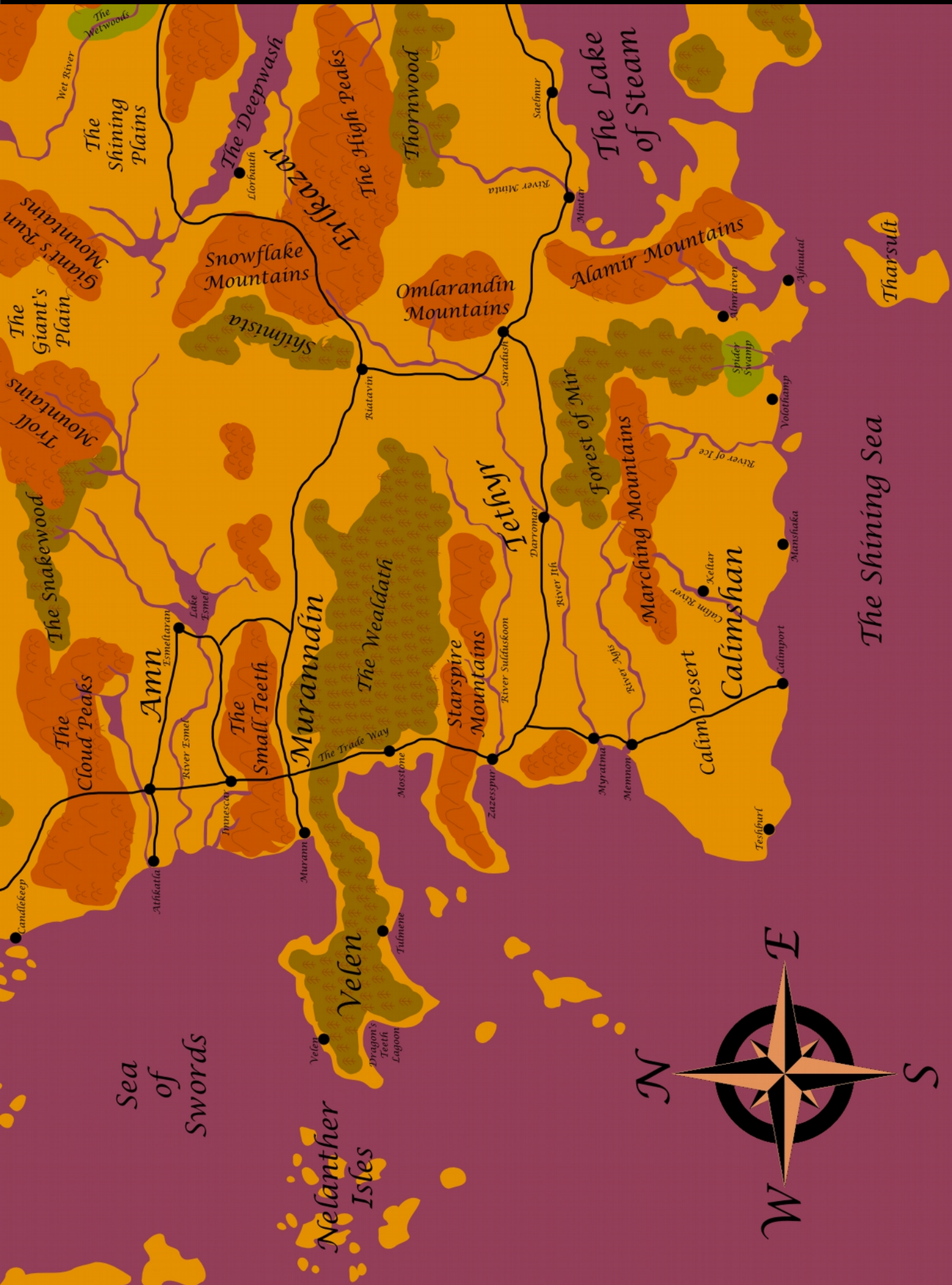


INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Lands of Intrigue. This guide will take you through the lands to the south of the Sword Coast. It provides information on the nations making up these lands, as well as on the Folk of Intrigue: powerful groups and individuals that play an important part in shaping these nations.

Learn about the mercantile nation of Amn, the fractured lands of Calimshan, and the brewing conflict in Tethyr. Gain insight into the vampire-werewolf conflict of Erlkazar, the Kozakura-influenced culture of Muranndin, and the fledgling nation of Velen. Uncover secrets about the Knights of the Shield, the Maztican Insurgents, the Twisted Rune and other groups that are hoping to bend the Lands of Intrigue to their will.

The Lands of Intrigue are yours to explore and there are many types of adventures to be had. Will you get caught up in the game of politics plaguing Amn? Will you fight for one of the sides in Tethyr's coming war? Will you try to uncover lost cities and ruins scattered across Calimshan? The choice, as ever, is yours.



Sea of Swords

Nelanther Isles

Velen

Amn

The Small Teeth

Muram

The Wealthath

Starspire Mountains

Jetyrn

Forest of Mir

Marching Mountains

Calim Desert

Calimshan

Calimport

The Shining Plains

Snowflake Mountains

The High Peaks

Omlarandin Mountains

Alamir Mountains

Forest of Mir

Marching Mountains

The Shining Sea

Tharsuft



AMN

HISTORY

Whilst the Second Sundering brought a great deal of trouble to several nations, for Amn it brought a great boon. The continent of Maztica, which had once been lost to Faerûn, had been rediscovered. The continent was famous as a place of untapped riches, and many explorers were quick to set out on expeditions to bring those treasures back to Amn.

However, the Second Sundering was not without its problems. The Chosen of Chauntea and the Chosen of Talona came to Amn, bringing their battle with them. Where the Chosen of Chauntea went, crops would grow bountiful. Where the Chosen of Talona went, plagues of locusts would follow.

The two Chosen fought many battles all over Amn. For every surplus of crops the Chosen of Chauntea gave, the Chosen of Talona would take away just as many. In the end, their battles took them to Crimmor, where they fought in the centre of the city. Their battle was brilliant and destructive and ended with both of them being turned to stone.

No one is quite sure what caused them to turn to stone. Some believe they both released petrification magic on each other at the same time, while others point their finger at the Cowled Wizards, the Emerald Cabal, the Red Wizards, or even the goddess Waukeen. Regardless, the two statues now stand in the centre of the city. Any attempts to move them, destroy them or even unpetrify them have thus far failed.

Whilst much of the damage done by their battles was eventually undone, the sheer destructive might they'd managed to unleash reinforced the Amnian view that magic was dangerous. As such, laws have been enacted to limit the use of divine magic, with more changes being promised soon.

SOCIETY

If Amn is dominated by one thing it is wealth. The nation is run by the High Houses, powerful merchant families that rule over the rest of Amn. Those with wealth can buy many privileges, whilst those at the bottom must make do with their meagre existence.

To Amnians, little else matters other than completing a transaction and making some profit. Things like legality and morality aren't supposed to muddy the making of money. Because of this attitude, Amn is an incredibly wealthy nation, though not exactly a well-liked one.

While Amn has a reputation for being a very morally and legally lax nation, one area in which it is very stringent is magic. Anyone caught casting arcane spells in Amn without the permission of one of the High Houses must face the wrath of the Cowled Wizards. This permission can be bought or won by doing favours for the High Houses, but it doesn't come cheap.

More recently, divine magic has been declared illegal without the support and patronage of a

local temple. However, this patronage is easy to come by and there is no organised body to keep tabs on divine magic. As such, the laws governing divine magic are incredibly lax compared to those governing arcane magic, at least for now.

SLAVERY IN AMN

Like many things in Amn, slavery sits in a nebulous legal area. While it is theoretically illegal to own slaves, many criminals have found ways to get around the law, whether by being covert or by bribing the right people. It helps that those that are meant to uphold the law are usually incompetent or corrupt or both.

However, much a guard or official is willing to overlook depends on the individual and the circumstance. Foreign slaves or monstrous slaves are easier to ignore, as is the owning of slaves if it's done by powerful enough people. Many also find it easier to turn a blind eye to the simple transporting of slaves rather than the trading or using of slaves.

Athkatla is the exception to all this. It is a city where anything goes, including slavery. There is a highly active slave market within the city. Most who trade in slaves don't have to worry about legal reprisals, so long as they don't cross the wrong people. However, the lawlessness of Athkatla swings both ways and, should slaves rise up and escape, the law won't necessarily be on the side of their former master.

RELIGION

The mercantile nature of Amn extends to their worship. They tend not to be very pious, but will pray to gods when they need something, especially protection. For examples, sailors and merchants that travel via the sea regularly pray to Umberlee for protection; whilst those who travel by land pray to the likes of Malar and Mask to protect them from beasts and bandits.

However, there are some gods that are worshipped with true piety and devotion. Worship of Waukeen is incredibly commonplace in Amn. She is the goddess of wealth and trade, as such it is only appropriate that she be revered highly in a nation such as Amn.

Helm, Lliira, Sune and Cyric are also greatly loved for similar reasons. Helm helps to protect people and their property. Lliira grants opportunities to spend one's wealth on pleasure and hedonism. Sune is the goddess of beauty, which ties in with Amn's superficial status-driven society. Cyric is seen as the god of ambition and is said to give people the drive to better themselves.

Chauntea is also a popular goddess. This is due to the fact that much of Amn's wealth comes from its agricultural surplus. Whilst her worship of her used to come largely from farmers, the chaos unleashed by the Chosen of Talona's locusts has made many in Amn more appreciative of Chauntea's blessings.

LOCATIONS IN AMN

Amn is home to much in the way of natural wonder. It has mountains, lakes, rivers, forests, plains and more. Numerous farming villages and towns are dotted around the place. Despite its many locales, there are only four places most folk think of when they think of Amn.

Athkatla. The capital of Amn and easily its most populous city. It most embraces Amn's ethos of greed. It is home to corrupt merchants and unscrupulous criminals. Justice is something to be bought in Athkatla, and legal officials are something to be bribed.

Almost anything that one could want can be found somewhere in Athkatla.

Crimmor. The caravan capital of Amn. This place is a hub for caravans as they travel along the Trade Way or towards Athkatla. It is a constantly shifting and changing places, with many caravans coming and going through it. House Ophal has complete control of this city, having either ousted or bought off the Shadow Thieves that were based here previously.

Esmeltaran. Built on the side of Lake Esmel, this city used to be the capital of Amn. It now serves as a resort city, offering beautiful and luxurious places for wealthy merchants who are looking to have a break from the big city. However, merchants who visit it shouldn't be so foolish as to let their guard down, as there is still plenty of intrigue and skulduggery within the city.

Imnescar. During a war with Muranndin a century ago, this city was almost completely destroyed. Amn worked on rebuilding it and fortifying it in case of another attack from the south. It has since become home to the Amnian Military's headquarters. Many adventurers and mercenaries can be found in this city, who offer their services as bodyguards to merchants heading into the "savage" lands to the south.

ORGANISATIONS

Amn is home to many groups and factions that compete with each other for power. Many in Amn are happy with this; see competition as necessary for improvement. Of the many groups, merchant houses and criminals within Amn, a handful of them are leagues above the rest in terms of power and influence.

High Houses. The most powerful merchant houses in Amn. They are the houses Selemchant, Dannihyr, Alibakkar, Ophal and Nashivaar. While they work together to maintain their power, they also work against each other just as often; competing over land, resources and power.

Cowled Wizards. An elite group of wizards under the command of House Selemchant. They are responsible for keeping unlicensed arcane spellcasters in check. Some see them as a top secret highly elite organisation that protects Amn's interests, while others see them as merely a bunch of spellcasting mercenaries in House Selemchant's pocket.

Shadow Thieves. A criminal organisation that has an iron grip on all crime within Amn, though their reach extends well beyond Amn. Many people know that they have some connection to House Dannihyr, though most underestimate just how deep their association goes.

Emerald Cabal. A group of revolutionaries (some would say terrorists) devoted to stemming the corruption within Amn. Originally made up exclusively of unlawful spellcasters, their ranks have since swelled to include many different types of agents. They have also become more organised with their attacks of late, leading some to think that they are merely pawns of some greater threat.

THE COUNCIL OF FIVE

The Council of Five is the ruling body of Amn. It is made up of the leaders of the High Houses. Each position within the Council comes with its own responsibilities, and the members of the Council use their position to benefit themselves and their own houses.

The Meisarch. A position held by the head of House Selemchant. The Meisarch is in charge of the Cowled Wizards, which House Selemchant act as the sponsors of. Thanks to the recent "Chosen Crisis", the present Meisarch is working on expanding the scope and authority of the Cowled Wizards.

The Tessarch. A position held by the head of House Dannihr. The Tessarch is in charge of judicial matters and settling differences between merchant houses. House Dannihr are also the semi-secret masters of the Shadow Thieves, which are sometimes used to aid in the Tessarch's duties.

The Namarch. A position held by the head of House Alibakkar. The Namarch is in charge of imports, maintaining trade routes, tariffs and taxation. House Alibakkar has profited greatly from the return of Maztica. This has made the present Namarch confident and hungry for more power and responsibility.

The Ittarch. A position held by the head of House Ophal. The Ittarch is in charge of intelligence agents and networks. House Ophal is either trying to shut down the Shadow Thieves or is trying to wrest control of them away from House Dannihr, depending on who one asks. Some believe they have already taken control of the Shadow Thieves and are merely letting House Dannihr think they still control them.

The Pommarch. A position held by the head of House Nashivaar. The Pommarch is in charge of exports and taxation. House Nashivaar used to be closely allied with the Church of Cyric. However, a number of mistakes from the church has led to the Pommarch losing a great deal of power, causing House Nashivaar to begin to distance itself from Cyric's church.

The Dahaunarch. An empty position. Once in charge of Amn's military, no one holds this seat. The Council of Five see no reason to fill it, as that would just mean splitting their power further. However, there are many lesser merchant houses out there that they can claim this position if they work hard enough.

RUMOURS & RECENT EVENTS

There are always events happening in Amn. Whether its slaves being traded in Athkatla, smugglers making deals in Crimmor, or merchants being blackmailed in Esmeltaran; something is always happening somewhere. However, of all the things that constantly happen in Amn, some are more pressing than others.

Cowled Clerics. House Selemchant is trying to extend the legal reach of the Cowled Wizards to include hunting down unlicensed divine magic. Some feel that doing so would be giving the Cowled Wizards too much power; instead propose putting together a consortium of clerics from different temples to handle it.

Pommarch Deposed. House Alibakkar are increasingly speaking of House Nashivaar's obsolescence. The reason for this is obvious. If House Nashivaar is removed from the High Houses and the Council of Five, then the responsibilities of the Pommarch will likely be handed over to the Namarch; greatly increasing House Alibakkar's power and influence.

Sudden Deaths. A number of important figures from House Dannihr and House Ophal have recently died in mysterious circumstances. It could be the start of a war between the houses. Some say it's them competing to take control of the Shadow Thieves; whilst others say it's the Shadow Thieves playing them off against each other so that they can seize control of both sides.

DM TIPS: ADVENTURING IN AMN

Of all the Lands of Intrigue, Amn is the most suited for telling stories about crime and corruption. Amn, especially Athkatla, is a dark and seedy place. There are rarely any good guys around. PCs might find groups and individuals whose interests align with their own, but such alliance will likely only last as long as its convenient for the other party.

Characters can easily find themselves sucked into a power struggle between two or more despicable individuals. Less heroic characters could easily act like mercenaries; profiting from these power struggles. More heroic characters could struggle to make the best of a bad situation. They might back the lesser of two evils or just try to do the most good in the immediate future.

CALIMSHAN

HISTORY

Long ago, the people of Calimshan were ruled by cruel genie masters, the most powerful of them being Memnon the efreeti and Calim the djinni. Eventually the genies were sealed away, the people of Calimshan being freed from their despotic rule.

However, the Spellplague caused Calim, Memnon and their genie followers to be freed from their prison; allowing them to take control of Calimshan once more. Calim took control of Calimport, whilst Memnon took control of the city that bore his name. Other towns and settlements fell under their control, with only Almraiven managing to remain truly free.

During this time, many residents of Calimshan, presumed to be human, cast off their disguises, revealing themselves to be genasi. They joined forces with the armies of Calim and Memnon; aided them in subjugating the human population of Calimshan, turning them into slaves.

Some time later, in 1450 DR, Calim and Memnon were mysteriously banished back to the Elemental Planes. However, even with them gone, the genies and genasi continued to subjugate the human population, continued to fill Calimshan with war and destruction.

It seemed as though things would remain that way until, in 1484 DR, the Mukhtar (a Chosen of Ilmater) appeared in Calimshan. He performed many deeds to win the respect of the people, eventually leading the human slaves in a nonviolent revolt against their masters.

Unfortunately, before he could complete his work, the Mukhtar mysteriously disappeared. This turned a peaceful revolution to descend into a bloody rebellion. Many genies and genasi were slain. The remaining genies fled into the desert, whilst the genasi were largely left at the mercy of the revolutionaries.

Calimshan today is a chaotic place. The cities are divided. There is still tension between the human and genasi populations. Many are struggling for wealth and power, with no clear person coming out on top.

LEGENDS OF THE MUKHTAR

The Mukhtar was originally known as Kieren Plainborn. He was granted the title “Mukhtar” (which literally translates to “Chosen” but is also used as a term for the elected head of a village or community) by his followers. It soon got to the point where his true name was almost completely forgotten, most simply knowing him as the Mukhtar.

The Mukhtar is famed for many things. The most famous of them is the Raising of Ajhuatal. Calimshan had suffered greatly from rivers drying up and the desert spreading. The Mukhtar sought to rectify this. As such, he travelled to the sunken city of Ajhuatal, which had once been ruled by the noble marid Ajhuu.

The city was inhabited by merfolk, who had mastered the marid’s power still sealed away within the city. The Mukhtar knew that Ajhuu’s power could restore water and life to the desert. At first it seemed as though the merfolk weren’t inclined to help but, through kind words and honest diplomacy, the Mukhtar was able to convince them to use their powers for the betterment of the people of Calimshan.

As such, the merfolk performed a ritual, calling up all of Ajhuu’s stored power. Rain spread across the desert for thirty days and thirty nights. Rivers that had once dried up flowed freely again. Where great forests, swamps and oases had died, there was life once more. The water to do so had to come from somewhere, though, and the water level surrounding Ajhuatal was lowered, as the merfolk had known it would be.

With the city no longer buried beneath the waves, the merfolk could no longer live there, but humans could. Thousands of humans flocked to this new city, many of them coming from cities that had been torn apart by the genies, such as Suldolphor. They offered their thanks to the merfolk, as well as to the Mukhtar. Many went on to aid the Mukhtar in his quest to liberate the other cities of Calimshan.

The Raising of Ajhuatal was not without its consequences, though. In unleashing all of Ajhuatal’s power, it also broke the wards sealing an army of marids in place. These marids quickly spread across Calimshan, spreading chaos and destruction wherever they went. Almraiven was hit particularly bad by the marids, who took particular delight in tearing apart the city’s docks and shipyards.

Despite this drawback, many saw it as a fair price to pay for what it achieved. To this day, Ajhuatal is strongly associated with the Mukhtar. It is seen as a sign of his wisdom and compassion, as well as a sign of what can be achieved with the right words and the right actions.

SOCIETY

Calimshan is a nation struggling to rebuild itself. In truth, it is not clear if Calimshan is still a single nation or a collection of nations. Each settlement acts as an independent city-state. There is no animosity between these city-states, though, and Calishites still consider themselves a singular people.

Wealth is central to much of Calishite. Those with money can surround themselves with mercenaries and guards, can impose their will upon other people. With no clear leader in charge of most cities, power falls into the hands of those with the strength to inflict their will on others.

Despite this, Calimshan isn’t completely lawless. The powerful merchants quickly realised that stability was important for business and pooled their resources to fund city guards and other necessities.

As well as wealth, social status is also important to the Calishites. There are no real sultans or calephs around any more. However, Calishan has a history of people giving themselves flowery titles. As such, many have created their own titles for themselves, such as “Caleph of Memnon”, “Sultan of Wine” or “Vizier of the Red Harem”.

Much like everything else, these titles only stick if one has the power to back up their claims. The more elaborate someone’s title, the more powerful they need to be to back it up. As such, smaller merchants either avoid such titles or deliberately use titles that play down their importance, so as not to attract unwanted attention.

Whilst wealth and social status are important, more than anything the people of Calimshan value freedom. Due to being slaves for so long, they are unlikely to bend their knee to another any time soon. It's likely because of this that no definitive leader has emerged to lead Calimshan.

SLAVERY IN CALIMSHAN

For a long time, slavery was accepted as the norm in Calimshan. However, after much of the human population were enslaved under the genies, slavery is now despised in Calimshan. Where it was once seen as only fitting and proper for a person of wealth to own slaves, it is now seen as the height of barbarity.

Many powerful merchants now use economic pressure to combat slavery. Almraiven was one of the first places to suffer from this change to the status quo. Many powerful merchants within the city were forced to give up their slaves. This sudden change to the status quo caused many problems to the city, which it is still recovering from.

The monstrous nation of Murandin handled this change better. They simply declared all slaves indentured servants instead. No one was truly fooled by this changing of terms, however the pretence of change combined with a number of other concessions caused the people of Calimshan to tolerate it.

Other places, such as Athkatla, are simply too powerful for the fractured and divided Calimshan to hope to change with economic pressure. As such, wealthy Calishites instead fund insurgency groups to stir up revolts amongst slaves in these cities and nations. This also often has the additional benefit of destabilising powerful economic rivals.

RELIGION

Of the Faerûnian Pantheon, the most loved gods in Calimshan are Ilmater (who helped them win their freedom), Waukeen (who represents the acquisition of wealth), and Asmodeus (who gives them vices to spend their wealth on). Other popular gods include Azuth, Hoar, Llira, Shar, Sune and Tyr.

Whilst all gods of the Faerûnian Pantheon are worshipped, some make people uncomfortable because of their association with the genie lords. This includes the elemental gods (Akadi, Istishia, Kossuth and Grumbar), as well as the gods of tyranny and pain (such as Bane and Loviatar).

LOCATIONS IN CALIMSHAN

Calimshan covers a large area. Where other nations would hurry to spread themselves across the land in numerous towns and villages, Calishites tend to cluster together in crowded cities. This is partially to do with the harshness of the environment surrounding them, but is just as much to do with their love of trade and commerce.

Calimport. Calimport is an incredibly large and populous city. It is the city most people think of when they think of Calimport. Despite the troubles it has faced, it is quickly becoming a prosperous and powerful city. The many merchant factions that have sprung up to fill the power vacuum are able to work civilly with each other, at least for now.

Also, unlike many cities that fell under genasi rule, the humans of Calimport are able to live alongside their former masters in relative peace. Part of this is due to the Mukhtar

having centred his peaceful revolution from within Calimport. Another factor is that there are comparatively fewer genasi in this city than in others; many of them having fled when they sensed revolution on the horizon.

Memnon. Memnon is a city where might makes right. It is a city made up of merchant guilds and criminal organisations (not that there is a real distinction between the two in the lawless city). Fights are common between rival gangs, and powerful merchants send hired swords to fight against each other.

The city is also home to a large number of genasi. When revolution came, the genasi quickly became an underclass that was frequently hunted down and killed. The surviving genasi soon gathered into gangs for protection. Many of them are now criminals or sellswords; others trying to escape persecution by disguising themselves as humans.

Ajhuutal. Unlike much of Calimshan, Ajhuutal is relatively peaceful and ordered. It is a city of wise men, sages and philosophers. The city is led by the Undine Council, which is elected by its citizens once every three years. The Undine Council is typically made up of those most skilled at debate and rhetoric.

Ilmater is highly venerated in Ajhuutal. Many within the city like to think of themselves as kind, enlightened and fair-minded. Greed and selfishness aren't as widely accepted as they are elsewhere in Calimshan. As such, those with selfish intention need to try harder to hide their true motives whilst in Ajhuutal.

Almraiven. Being home to many arcane practitioners, Almraiven managed to repel genies who attempted to take it over. However, continually repelling genie attacks took a slow toll on the city. By the time the genies were eventually sent scattering, Almraiven was on the verge of collapse.

This, combined with many other factors (such as the marid attack, the abolishment of slavery, and the death of the WeavePasha) led to the city falling into chaos. Now various merchant forces struggle to wrest control of the city away from the Guild Arcane, who see themselves as the only force preventing Almraiven from falling into chaos.

Keltar. This city wasn't conquered by the genies, unlike many others. Instead, it was used as a battleground. Many armies passed through the city, battles breaking out in or near it. The battle between Calim and Memnon also caused the desert to spread and rivers to dry up, causing Keltar to become near uninhabitable.

Despite that, some people persevered and remained in the city. For their perseverance, they were rewarded when the rivers began to flow again and life suddenly became abundant in the local area. However, now that it is bountiful once more, many who abandoned it long ago are returning, seek to take advantage of the city's sudden good fortune.

Manshaka. This city was already rough before the genies appeared. It was home to smugglers, criminals, bandits and thugs. It was, and still is, home to the Blood Arenas. The Blood Arenas are gladiator arenas where visitors can fight against each other or

against monsters.

When the genies took over, they were impressed by the violence, cunning and twisted personalities of the inhabitants. Those willing to prove their strength and depravity were often given more perks by the genie overlords. The locals retained this attitude even after the genies were forced out; with a person's position in society being determined by how tough he or she is.

Teshburl. This city was the primary shipbuilding port for the genies. They taught the locals the secret of imbuing ships with elemental energy; making them capable of things that no mundane ship could do. When the genies were deposed, the locals kept hold of this knowledge, decided to use it for themselves.

The city is now home to a four major shipbuilding guilds. Each guild knows the ritual for imbuing ships with one of the four elements, and is desperately trying learn the ritual for the other three elements. Thus, the guilds not only try to compete with each other over trade, but also over secrets. The only time they unite is when they are trying to prevent outsiders from learning the secrets of their craft.

Volothamp. This city is built atop a mine containing many precious metals and gems. The genies used slaves to plunder these mines, amassing great treasures within the Vaults of Volothamp. When the genies were forced to flee, they left their treasures behind. However, no one has been able to claim these treasures, as many magical wards seal the four vaults.

Fortunately, the mines still contain much in the way of treasure. When the genies were forced out, several former slaves were quick to hire mercenaries to claim the mines for themselves. The city is now controlled by half a dozen powerful people, each competing for complete control; each tenuously holding onto power with their mercenary army of dubious loyalty.

CALIM DESERT

If Calimshan is infamous for one thing, it's the Calim Desert. This vast wasteland is home to many dangers. As well as the usual desert-dwelling monsters, there are nomadic tribes, wandering bandits and rampaging genies. The desert also has three hazards and threats that are wholly unique to it.

Calim's Breath. The lingering effect of Calim's influence on the desert. Some who travel the desert sometimes experience a sudden change in the wind. Fierce winds can suddenly come out of nowhere, brief whirlwinds are also known to appear. Other effects are more subtle, like a sudden stillness in the air, or a quiet whispering on the wind.

Memnon's Crackle. The lingering effect of Memnon's influence on the desert. Travellers going across the desert sometimes experience a sudden increase in temperature. This can have any number of additional effects, such as the ground crystallising, or nearby vegetation igniting. Occasionally the heat is so intense, there is crackling in the air, which almost sounds like somebody speaking.

Ajhuu's Dissonance. Mirages have become more common in the Calim Desert, ever since the raising of Ajhuutal. These new mirages are actually illusions, and vary greatly in nature. Illusions of oases are particularly dangerous, as no matter how real illusory food and drink feels, it merely masks hunger and thirst instead of satiating it. Some who travel the desert also experience auditory hallucinations. The most common of these hallucinations is the sound of flowing water, which almost sounds like a dozen babbling voices, all out of sync with one another.

ORGANISATIONS

Calimshan is a chaotic place, with no clear leader and no clear path ahead. Many individuals and organisations are quickly rising to fill the power vacuum, though. It seems as though one of them must succeed eventually, it's just a question of how much time and bloodshed it will take before everything settles down.

Powerful Merchants. Calimshan is home to many powerful merchants who believe they can unite the nation under them. Those in the best position to actually succeed are Caliph Altogul, Prince Toprak, Queen Azala, and the Smiling Vizier.

The Guild Arcane. The Guild Arcane is a mages' guild. It was once spread across much of Calimshan, but was later pushed back to just Almraiven. The guild claims that only the disciplined minds of wizards can hope to bring order to Calimshan. However, few outside Almraiven trust them, and they are even struggling to cling onto power within their own city.

The Four Sons. A collection of groups devoted to bringing back the genies, in an attempt to bring order back to Calimshan. Many, but not all of them, are genasi longing for the days when they were still in charge. Each group has its own way of trying to restore the genies' rule. Some are trying to summon Calim or Memnon, whilst others attempt to rally an army of genies from the desert.

Ilmater's Tears. A religious group devoted to Ilmater. They believe that if everyone prays hard enough, Ilmater will return his Chosen to the people of Calimshan. Whilst many would gladly follow the Mukhtar if he were to return, many see Ilmater's Tears as foolishly naïve. Despite that, they've gained a large amount of support, with many important figures donating to their cause.

RUMOURS & RECENT EVENTS

The streets are constantly abuzz with rumours in Calimshan. Many of these rumours are fanciful exaggerations, if not outright lies. However, some of these rumours contain the occasional kernel of truth, whilst others are simply so compelling that adventurers can't help but investigate their veracity.

Planar Trips. By raiding old genie strongholds, certain merchants have come across Planar Archways. A creature that steps through one of these stone archways is transported to one of the elemental planes. Those who return tend to come back with wonderful treasures: diamonds from the Plane of Earth, artefacts from the City of Brass, exotic flora and fauna from the Isle of Dread. Now many adventurers are lining up, willing to pay exorbitant fees for the opportunity to travel through one of these magical archways.

Missing Genasi. There have recently been rumours of genasi going missing in the area of Teshburl. The Burning Hand (a criminal gang comprised of fire genasi) claims that the people of Teshburl are responsible. Allegedly, the process for creating elemental ships involves imbuing a genasi's soul into a regular ship, thus the people of Teshburl are resorting to abducting and killing innocent genasi. Others propose that it's more likely that the genasi were simply caught trying to steal guild secrets and were executed

for it.

Shoon's Return. Long ago, the Lands of Intrigue were ruled over by a an incredibly powerful necromancer named Shoon IV. He was greatly despised, and tales of his cruelty survive to this day. Recently there have been rumours that Shoon IV has returned has a lich, has covertly taken over the Guild Arcane. These rumours are likely made up to undermine the Guild Arcane's credibility. Despite that, the rumours are spreading quickly and the guild is feeling its hold on Almraiven slip away.

Emirajah's City. The return of Ajhuutal has caused some to speak of another mythical location; the city of Emir. It is said to have been a prosperous city ruled by Emirajah, a noble dao. According to legend, Emirajah buried his city beneath the Marching Mountains rather than surrender it to Calim. An explorer named Ouzo intends to find the city and claim the treasures within. All he needs is a group of hardy adventurers to accompany him.

DM TIPS: ADVENTURING IN CALIMSHAN

Calimshan offers much in the way of power struggles and intrigue, but it also offers much in the way of "classic" adventuring. There are many ruins and places of interest hidden amongst the desert and the mountains. They could hold any number of untold dangers and treasures.

There is also a lot of hidden treasure within the cities. The genies were only forced out relatively recently, and there could be any number of forgotten genie storehouses just waiting to be rediscovered. These can easily be tied into the intrigue of the setting, as multiple factions see the wealth, power and prestige of these treasures are the key to them seizing control of Calimshan.

ERLKAZAR

HISTORY

Erlkazar used to be part of Tethyr. It peacefully seceded from the rest of Tethyr in 1347 DR, during a time when Tethyr was destabilised. For most of its history, it seemed a stable and peaceful nation. One of the only major problems to vex the place was the increasing number of bandits attacking trade routes.

This problem was solved, in a manner of speaking, when the vampire Saestra Karanok came to Erlkazar. She rallied the bandits under her, had them leave the trade routes and villagers alone; while attacking the lands neighbouring Erlkazar instead.

Using her criminal empire, intimidation and other tactics, she was able to take control of Erlkazar. Whilst, by day, Erlkazar appeared to be the same pleasant collection of villages as ever; by night the villagers would lock their doors and try to ignore the creatures that prowled around at night.

For some time, it seemed as though Saestra's control of Erlkazar was absolute. However, slowly signs of resistance emerged. Firstly, the people of Impresk made a deal with some werewolves in return for their protection. Then the dwarves of Carrelath began creating flesh golems to fight back the vampires and bandits. Then there were rumours of a "swamp creature" taking over Shalanar. Most recently, there are rumours of vampires and bandits going missing when they visit Tanistan.

Saestra's far-reaching control has been forced back to Ahlarkhem. She has since turned her bandits and vampire spawn inwards, no longer attacking neighbouring settlements, but instead focussing on the threats to her power. Presently, Erlkazar is caught in a delicate power struggle between the four or five factions that control it.

SOCIETY

Despite all that has happened in Erlkazar, the average lives of its citizens have not changed much over the past century. Most of them are simple hill folk who live in small, isolated hamlets and villages. They pay token fealty to whichever "baron" rules their land, and largely try to ignore the strange happenings across the land.

However, it is getting increasingly difficult to ignore the power struggle that is taking place. The rulers each demand more resources (be it recruits, fresh bodies or simply blood) to fuel their struggle. Some villages also get caught in fights between one or more sides, or might get attacked as a message to their ruler.

Most villagers in Erlkazar try to appear content, don't like to talk about the troubles affecting Erlkazar, partially because of superstition, partially because they don't know who might be listening, and partially because they are not always entirely sure what is happening. Whilst some folk might see certain rulers as the lesser of two evils, most long for the peaceful days when Erlkazar was ruled by a king instead of warring barons.

RELIGION

The folk of Erlkazar primarily worshipped gods of knowledge and magic (Azuth, Deneir, Mystra, Oghma and Savras) until Saestra came along. She outlawed organised worship, saw religion and faith as anathema to her kind.

Since then, what little worship there is has been done in private. Worship of gods relating to light and protection (Amaunator, Helm, Ilmater, Lathander and Torm) has become increasingly common.

Recently, especially in Carrelath, worship of gods of knowledge and magic has become increasingly associated with Baron Firestone and his army of flesh golems. Open worship of such gods is allowed, although doing so can bring down the wrath of those that oppose Baron Firestone.

Meanwhile, in Impresk, worship of Malar has become increasingly common due to the presence of werewolves. Some folk pray to Malar and paint his holy symbol on their door in either support of the werewolves or in the hopes that it will deter the werewolves from attacking them.

LOCATIONS IN ERLKAZAR

Historically, Erlkazar has been divided into five baronies. Each of these baronies now has a different person in charge of it. These new rulers are sometimes referred to as barons, although only one of them has actually taken the title of baron.

Ahlarkhem. This barony is in the south-east of Erlkazar. It is ruled by Saestra Karanok, a powerful vampire. She used to rule all of Erlkazar, though her influence has significantly been pushed back. However, she still has control of many of the tunnels beneath Erlkazar.

Most folk in Ahlarkhem are very used to her rule. They know that, so long as they are indoors at night, they are safe from her and her followers. Those who wander outside at night do so at their own peril.

Carrelath. This barony is located in the west of Erlkazar. It is ruled by Baron Vygor Firestone, a dwarf wizard. He created an army of flesh golems to help defend the dwarves from vampire attacks. Since then, his scope has expanded. He has declared himself the Baron of Carrelath; seeks to expand his army of flesh golems across Carrelath.

Folk are divided in how they feel about Firestone. Many support him as he was the one who drove the vampires out of their land. Others see him as bad as the vampires, if not worse. He constantly demands resources to create new flesh golems, which requires valuable materials, fresh body parts, and some life force donated from his subjects. On

top of that, flesh golems are seen as creepy and can cause great destruction when Firestone loses control of them.

Impresk. This barony is located in the north of Erlkazar. It is led by Grauvon von Pelzort, a werewolf lord. Impresk was one of the few baronies to attempt to resist Saestra's rule. She fought against them and, when defeat seemed inevitable, they turned to Grauvon and his pack of werewolves in desperation. He helped drive off the vampires, but now they are left with him and his pack in charge.

The people of Impresk don't love Grauvon, but they fear him and prefer him to the alternative. Grauvon and his werewolves are free to do as they like to the villagers; sometimes hunt them for sport. Some try to keep their heads down and hope they don't attract Grauvon's attention. Others sycophantically offer gifts to Grauvon and his werewolves, in the hopes of being spared.

Shalanar. This barony is located in the east of Erlkazar. It is led by a creature known as the Black Shambler. The Black Shambler is a mound of memory moss, also called oblivax. No one is quite sure where it came from, some say it came from beneath the city of Llorbauth; others claiming it clambered out of the Deepwash. It took over Llorbauth, turning everyone in the city into its servant.

Most folk in Shalanar haven't seen the Black Shambler. However, servants of the Black Shambler have visited many villages, giving them seeds to plant and saplings to tend to. These seeds and saplings grow into various plant monsters under the Black Shambler's control. The villagers are too afraid to go against the Black Shambler's wishes. They try not to think too much about what they're doing or about the unnatural plants they're tending to.

Tanistan. This barony is located in the south-west of Erlkazar. No one knows who controls it, though there is obviously some power in play. Vampires and bandits that visit it have a habit of disappearing. Other baronies that have tried to extend their influence into it have likewise had people disappear.

This resistance doesn't seem to come from the barony's inhabitants. The folk of Tanistan are a dour and pessimistic lot. They've offered little resistance to Saestra in the past and seem to offer even less resistance to this new force. They are secretive and often suspicious of outsiders. If they know what is going on in Tanistan, they haven't revealed it to anyone.

ORGANISATIONS

The five baronies are each led by a different organisation. These organisations struggle against each other for more control, each trying to extend their influence as far across Erlkazar as possible. Most of these battles are indirect plays for power, or are minor skirmishes. Thus far there have been no major battles or wars between the sides.

The Night Barony. Saestra leads an army of vampire spawn, bandits and even a handful of fellow vampires. She is their undisputed leader, has no one who questions

her leadership. Her base is hidden somewhere in the numerous tunnels beneath Ahlarkhem.

Firestone's Army. Vygor Firestone, a shield dwarf wizard, has mastered a means of creating flesh golems more cheaply and efficiently than before; all it requires is some life energy from a willing donor. With his army of flesh golems (as well as dwarves and humans loyal to him), he has taken control of Carrelath. Some locals oppose his rule, but he dismisses them as pawns of Saestra.

Grauin's Pack. A group of werewolves led by Grauin, a powerful werewolf lord. They are cruel and petty, only have loyalty to each other, care little for what becomes of Erlkazar. They only work to defend Impresk because they see it as their territory, their personal playground, where they can do whatever they wish.

Llorbauth's Children. When the Black Shambler took over Llorbauth, the city became covered in plants and vines. Through a mix of intimidation, magic and memory devouring, its citizens were turned into loyal followers of the Black Shambler. The Black Shambler is now growing an army of plants, presumably intent on conquering all of Erlkazar.

RUMOURS & RECENT EVENTS

Erlkazar is dominated by the power struggle between the five baronies. This struggle doesn't seem to have an end in sight, as no side has a clear advantage over the others. However, certain recent events may change the balance of power in favour of one of the baronies.

Saedra's Tithe. Recently, villages in Ahlarkhem have been visited by Saedra's agents, who demand that the villagers hand over one or more of their own. Refusing this demand results in the village being razed. Most folk aren't happy with giving up one of their own, but they are used to doing as Saestra says. What becomes of the villagers handed over to Saedra's agents is unknown.

Intelligent Golems. Firestone claims to have discovered a way to make intelligent flesh golems, golems able to think for themselves. He believes that from this, it's only a small step before he can transfer the consciousness of a living creature into a flesh golem. Some are quick to embrace the idea of being transformed into a powerful, unstoppable flesh golem; whilst others agree that this can only end in disaster.

New Wolves. Grauin's pack has recently begun offering villagers the opportunity to become werewolves. If they are able to prove their worth and their loyalty, they can shed their humanity and become members of the pack. Many suspect that Grauin is trying to bolster his pack's number in preparation for an assault against the vampires.

Lost Wizards. Recently, strange wizards arrived in Erlkazar. They sought to locate the Black Shambler and destroy it; believed it was an old enemy of theirs known as Phagon. They travelled to Llorbauth to defeat it but did not return. Many believe that they were defeated. If this is true, the obliviax has likely devoured their memories and arcane knowledge; has only grown more powerful as a result.

Bad Dreams. Those that spend their nights in Tanistan have reported restless nights and bad dreams about shadows stalking the land. Some claim that this is the sure sign of the presence of a powerful fiend in the area. Others ascribe it to the presence of a powerful psionic creature, most likely an aberration. Whatever the case, most agree that something large and nasty has made its home in Tanistan.

DM TIPS: ADVENTURING IN ERLKAZAR

Erlkazaz lends itself most well to being a horror setting, be it gothic horror or even cosmic horror. There are many villages to visit, each with their own secrets. The locals often behave secretly and, while they might not seem hostile, they do behave a little off.

A large part of the horror comes from the uncertainty of the situation. Why are these people behaving the way they do? Who can be trusted? Who really understands what's happening around here? What is that strange sound in the night? Was it wise to come here or have we just made a huge mistake?

MURANNDIN

HISTORY

Muranndin was established in 1371 DR following the Sothillisian War. The war was led by Sothillis and Cyrvisnea, two powerful oni. The war was initially fought to secure ancient giant weapons. In the end, the plan failed, though they had established and secured a powerful and wealthy monstrous nation by the end of it.

Cyrvisnea didn't care much for politics or ruling a nation. She took to travelling, following more rumours of ancient giant weapons. Sothillis, meanwhile, was happy to establish a nation. He willingly accepted the mantle of emperor and proceeded to rule over this new nation.

Stories of a monstrous nation drew in many of the less civilised races. Not just from Faerûn, but even from lands beyond, such as Kara-Tur. Many kenku and goblinoids, orcs arrived in the new nation, as did ogres and giants. Curiously, it also attracted many fey, hags especially, as well as a number of minotaurs, doppelgangers, and other monstrosities.

The large number of different creatures led to instability, with many clans, tribes and factions struggling with each other for power. This came to a head in 1481 DR, when an ogrillion (an orc/ogre hybrid) named Vorrak Demonstone led a revolt against him.

Many orcs and half-orcs joined the revolt on Vorrak's side. However, Sothillis managed to rally his forces against Vorrak and defeat him. Sothillis showed no quarter; hunting down and eliminating those who followed Vorrak and anyone loyal to him.

The display of power has reminded many why Sothillis is in charge and any who plotted to usurp him are quickly reassessing their plans. It has also led to Sothillis being more active in ruling Muranndin, partially to clear up the mess left by Vorrak's Rebellion, and partially to make sure no one else is amassing too much power.

EMPEROR SOTHILLIS

Emperor Sothillis is the ruler of Muranndin. He is a large, powerful oni sorcerer. In his youth, he had mottled green skin, though a mix of age and magical experimentation has turned his skin a dark blue colour.

He was once a powerful conqueror, though the past century of ruling Muranndin has changed him. Conquest isn't as important to him as it once was. He still seeks to expand his influence, but would rather do so politically and economically. He wishes to establish Muranndin as a powerful nation in its own right.

One major obstacle, though, is that Muranndin is still seen as a monstrous and savage nation. Part of this is likely due to its history, though it certainly doesn't help that it is populated largely by creatures that are considered "monsters" by most folk. Nevertheless, Sothillis is determined to turn Muranndin into a powerful nation, no matter how long it takes, and no matter what concessions he needs to make along the way.

SOCIETY

Muranndin is a diverse land. It is divided into multiple provinces, each ruled over to a feudal lord that ultimately answers to the emperor. The power of these lords (both within their provinces and within Muranndin as a whole) varies immensely. The size of these provinces and

the way they're run also varies greatly.

Until recently many of these provinces were near-autonomous, although since Vorrak's Rebellion, Emperor Sothillis has taken an increased interest in how they're run. Whilst they still possess a great deal of freedom, they know that if they rock the boat too much or cause too much trouble for their neighbours, they will have his wrath to deal with.

Despite being home to many different races and creatures, very few of these races and creatures are integrated. Most form their own separate tribes; have their own provinces. If two or more races do share a province, they'll usually be divided into different castes with one of the races dominating the other races.

The exception to this is Murann, the capital of Muranndin. The city home to many different races and creatures. It is a popular destination for merchants, travellers, and important people within Murann. The city is a melting pot for the greedy and ambitious; race holding little importance to those who seek wealth and prestige.

SLAVERY IN MURANNDIN

For much of its history, Muranndin has freely allowed slavery within its borders. This has changed recently, due in part to economic pressure from Calimshan, and partially due to Sothillis wishing for Muranndin to be accepted as a "civilised" nation. As such, Sothillis claims that Muranndin doesn't allow slavery and never has; instead it has indentured servants.

They claim that those who fought against them in the Sothillisian War were guilty of crimes against the state and had to work off their debt to Muranndin for 800 years. As most of these indentured servants were human and, thus, could never work off their debt in a single lifetime; the debt was passed onto their children.

This distinction is absurd and is contradicted by Muranndin having been actively involved in the slave trade. The Muranndians have many explanations about how this is to do with the transfer of debt but, for the most part, people consider these all meaningless excuses.

Fortunately, the change from slavery to indentured servants means that Muranndin is no longer officially involved with the slave trade. It also means that those families "indebted" to Muranndin can eventually work off their debt. A family's debts can also be paid off with money and by performing a great deed in service of Muranndin.

RELIGION

All religions are welcomed and accepted within Muranndin. Most folk worship a mix of their race's own pantheon and the Faerûnian Pantheon. This practise has more recently been influenced by oni from Kara-Tur (specifically Kozakura), who have brought with them the faith of the Eight Million Gods.

The faith of the Eight Million Gods involves worshipping numerous deities and spirits. This less constrained view of what constitutes a god has led to the creation of the Church of Many, which claims that the boundaries between pantheons, and even the boundaries between gods and non-gods is largely arbitrary.

The Church of Many has set up shrines and temples all across Muranndin, devoted to different beings. These beings can be gods from almost any pantheon, archdevils, archfey, demon lords, elemental princes and even powerful mortals.

These shrines and temples, much like the lords and provinces, are largely independent. There is no organised creed or ritual. Members of the Church of Many are free to pray to whichever

god or gods are appropriate to their situation. Someone might pray to the god Tyr one day, the archfey Titania the next day, and the demon prince Demogorgon another day.

Curiously, Emperor Sothillis has several shrines devoted to him, with many praying to him as a god. Sothillis neither encourages nor discourages worship of himself; neither confirms nor denies his alleged divinity.

LOCATIONS OF MURANNDIN

Murann has many towns and settlements, but only one major city of note, which is Murann. Murann is the hub of activity in Murann. It is home to many different races and creatures. It is divided into four major districts.

Noble District. This district is located in the centre of the city. In the centre of it is the Palace of Facade. It is a large palace, decorated with masks and images of faces. The architecture is often said to be twisting and confusing to visitors. However, design of the palace is also said to be ingenious, as it accommodates for creatures of many different sizes.

Surrounding the Palace of Facade is the High Wall. The High Wall is a collection of buildings which house nobles, dignitaries, diplomats and other important individuals visiting Murann. These buildings are interconnected through a maze of corridors and tunnels, making them perfect for spies and assassins.

Dock District. Along the western side of the city is the dock district, so named because it is home to the city's docks. It is made up of small buildings with many twisting alleyways between them. As well as being home to merchants and sailors, it is home to crime.

The most notable of the criminal organisations are the Taiyo Clan, the Tsuki Clan and the Talia Clan. They are kenku crime families that have a loose alliance with each other. They are involved with many activities in the Dock District, some legitimate, and others not. They are largely tolerated because they keep other types of criminals, worse criminals, in check.

Trader's District. On the south side of Murann is the Trader's District, also known as the Alchemist's District due to the large amount of alchemists it contains. It is home to many artisans and traders. It is a reasonably well-off district where folk can earn an honest living for themselves.

It is also home to the Centennial Sisterhood, an alliance of over a hundred hags, many of which are of green hags, but just as many come from stranger and more exotic hag species. They are skilled alchemists and artisans, able to create magical potions and minor magical items. However, the process by which they create their potions and magical items is closely guarded and likely not entirely wholesome.

Eastern District. A district in the north-east of Murann. It is home to those creatures that have settled in Murann from Kara-Tur (specifically Kozakura). It is home to oni,

ogres, humans, kenku, hags and doppelgangers.

The district is largely dominated by a select few oni, who control the majority of wealth and businesses in this district, and in lands beyond. These oni are largely responsible for the importing of goods and culture from Kozakura.

EASTERN INFLUENCES

Settlers from Kozakura brought with them much of their culture. This culture has merged with the culture of Muranndin over the past century. This has caused many in Muranndin to adopt elements of Kozakuran terminology. The ways Muranndin has been linguistically influenced by Kozakura are many and varied, though there are certain linguistic quirks that visitors can't help but notice.

Samurai. A term used for a the warrior caste. Some use the term more broadly then that, will refer to any warrior as a samurai.

Ninja. A term that once had a more precise definition, but has since come to refer to shadow monks, assassins, and shadow monks who become assassins.

Oni. Oni are sometimes called ogre mages in other parts of Faerûn, although it almost never happens in Muranndin. Oni are almost always referred to as oni, whilst ordinary ogres are sometimes referred to as lesser oni.

Hags. Certain hags are sometimes called different names in Muranndin. Green hags are called jade hags. Sea hags are called swamp hags. Annis hags are called mountain hags. Bheur hags are called snow hags.

Spirit World. The Spirit World refers to the Feywild, the Shadowfell or both. Kozakurans tend to see both planes as two sides of the same coin.

Copper Pieces. Those from Kozakura have the curious habit of measuring all costs in copper pieces, regardless of cost. Where a Faerûnian merchant would say something costs 5 gp, a Kozakuran merchant would say it costs 500 cp. This practice has spread rapidly, with much of Muranndin now using the Kozakuran pricing system.

ORGANISATIONS

Muranndin is home to many different organisations. Many of these organisations are theoretically devoted to keeping peace in Muranndin, however like many forces in Muranndin, are more interested in scheming and struggling for power and prestige.

Four Guardians. Muranndin is protected by four giant tribes. A tribe of hill giants protect the east. A tribe of fire giants protect the south. A tribe of storm giants protect the west. A tribe of frost giants protect the north. There are also rumours of a fifth tribe of guardians, who are either a tribe of stone giants that protect the Underdark, or a race of cloud giants that protect the heavens, depending on who one asks.

Samurai. A warrior caste within Muranndin. They enjoy certain perks due to their station but are also expected to behave honourably. Some uphold these standards as they loyally serve their masters, whilst others are little more than brigands and mercenaries.

Orc Bandits. Since Vorrak's army was defeated, there are few orcs and half-orcs remaining in Muranndin. Those that remain are largely bandits that have taken to roaming the wilderness; attacking vulnerable villages. Many of these villages are too far-removed to get official help; thus have taken to trying to hire samurai and adventurers to help defend them.

Shadow Temples. Secret monasteries dotted around Muranndin; in forests, in the

mountains and some say even in the Shadowfell. These shadow temples are largely independent from each other. They train shadow monks in the art of stealth, assassination, infiltration and sabotage. Some train simply to perfect their mind and body, whilst others go on to become assassins and mercenaries.

Eightfold Academy. An academy devoted to teaching arcane secrets. The academy is exclusively for those who show great promise or who come from wealthy enough backgrounds to buy their way in. The academy merges spiritualism with arcane study; blending the two together. Those that graduate are expected to use their arcane abilities to benefit Muranndin and its people.

EIGHTFOLD GODS

The Eightfold Academy gets its name from their focus on the eight schools of magic. They teach that all things that happen are due to these schools of magic. Fire is natural evocation magic, an illness is natural necromancy magic, a sword rusting is natural transmutation magic. They claim that understanding these schools of magic and how they relate to the wider world is the key to learning arcane magic.

Furthermore, they claim that each of these schools of magic has a patron deity. Helm is the god of abjuration. Azuth is the god of conjuration. Savras is the god of divination. Milil is the god of enchantments. Amuntor is the god of evocation. Leira is the goddess of illusions. Myrkul is the god of necromancy. Gond is the god of transmutation.

Some of their claims about these gods either show great insight or great ignorance, depending on who one asks. For example, they claim that Azuth originally became a god when he used the ultimate conjuration magic to transport himself to the ranks of divinity. They also claim Myrkul became reborn as the god of undeath and necromancy when he devoured the essence of Velsharoon, the previous god of necromancy.

RUMOURS & RECENT EVENTS

Muranndin is caught in a state of constant change, with many factions and organisations vying for power. Since Vorrak's Rebellion, some believe this struggles have died down. However, the truth is that they have simply become more subtle and political in nature. As such, it's not obvious which recent events will shake of the status quo the most.

Silver Way. Ginka, a minor oni merchant, claims to have recently found a pathway through the Spirit World connecting Muranndin and Kozakura, acting as a shortcut between the two nations. If this is true, Muranndin could become the hub for trade between Kara-Tur and western Faerûn. It also means that Ginka and her investors will likely be at the centre of it, becoming incredibly wealthy and powerful as a result.

Trademeet Revitalisation. The Trade Way is a well-travelled path that stretches from Calimport to north of the Cloud Peaks. It leads directly through Muranndin. Travellers could expect to safely pass through Muranndin (for a fee, of course) but had little inclination to stay. The Midnight Coven, a trio of hags, seeks to change that. They are working on re-establishing the town of Trademeet as a hub for travellers and traders.

Ann's Acceptance. Amn has never been happy with Sothillis taking the Muranndin region from them. For the most part, Amn has snubbed Muranndin when it comes to change. This seems to have changed recently, though, thanks to a kenku merchant named Lord Doki. No one is quite sure how this was achieved, but rumour has it that it involved forging a pact between the Shadow Thieves and the Tsuki Clan. However, the nature of this pact, and what it means for Muranndin, remains to be seen.

Orangeback Tribe. The Orangeback Tribe is a group of gnolls that have spent so long in the Feywild that their usual ferocity has been replaced with cunning and magical knowledge. They are fox-like in appearance, with golden and orange fur. Recently, they have taken to slipping in and out of the Feywild to meddle in Muranndian affairs. Some see them as simple tricksters, whilst others believe they are trying to manipulate events for their own ends.

Orochi Clan. The Orochi Clan is a group of yuan-ti that have recently settled in eastern Muranndin. They have been very well-behaved, mostly keeping to themselves; as well as paying the correct tithes towards Sothillis. Some believe that their good behaviour is suspicious, that they are up to something.

DM TIPS: ADVENTURING IN MURANNIN

Muranndin could be seen as a wild frontier. There are many small, isolated villages in need of help against bandits. There are many lords and struggling to maintain law and order in their province. There is also a lot of wonder and adventure to be had in a land dominated by gods, spirits and fey.

The city of Murann is no different. It is a place that is still finding his feet. Whilst Sothillis managed to fight off the most recent threat to his power, Vorrak won't be the last of his troubles. Murann is home to many different races and cultures; all of which are still learning to live alongside each other. It is a city caught in the crossroads, and characters could easily find themselves in a position to either cause or prevent the total collapse of the city's tenuous peace.

TETHYR

HISTORY

Tethyr is an old nation with a long and varied history. The point in history that most defines modern Tethyr is likely the rule of Queen Zaranda, which began in 1369 DR.

She was a reformist, sought to improve the lot of the common people. Part of this came from changing laws to give commoners more power, whilst at the same time reminding nobles that they existed to serve the common people and not the other way around.

Unfortunately, some of her changes have since been undone and many of her lessons have been forgotten. This is seen as especially true in the wake of the Wealing War in 1484 DR. It was a war fought between the people of Tethyr and the wild elves of Wealdath.

How the war started is a point of contention. In the year building up to the war, there were an increased number of monster attacks on settlements surrounding the forest of Wealdath. Many of these attacking monsters were beasts or creatures associated with the fey, which led to some blaming the elves.

Some commoners dared to go into Wealdath to find the cause of the attacks. They returned with proof that the Suldusk, a tribe of wild elves, had been bewitching the creatures of the forest and sending them to attack human settlements. This proof was presented to Queen Anais, who accepted it and sent her knights into the forest to put a stop to it.

The nature of this proof isn't accessible to the general public. This has caused some to doubt the veracity of this proof. Tethyr definitely has a history of anti-elf attitudes and someone could have easily faked the proof to spark a war. However, the elves are not entirely innocent either, as the Eldreth Veluuthra have been responsible for attacks on human lands in Tethyr in the past.

Regardless of the truth, knights were sent in to apprehend those responsible for the monster attacks. Once more, there is contention in how things went. Some claim the knights were simply trying to arrest those responsible, when the elves attacked them. Others paint the knights as bumbling simpletons, glory-hounds or just plain bigots who went into the forest and harassed or attacked the first elves they came across.

From those early conflicts, a war broke out. It was not a conventional war, as the Suldusk mostly hid within the forest, attacked by sending animals and monsters in their stead. The many guards and knightly orders struggled with attacks on this scale and of this nature.

It was largely militias and armies of ordinary people that kept settlements safe during this time, or that is how the common people remember it, at least. They remember the nobles cowering in their manors, surrounded by knights and mercenaries, whilst the common people were left to fend for themselves.

Many war heroes arose during this time, the most famous of them is Malek Tajan. He was fast at adapting to the new style of warfare, developed strategies for dealing with the monsters

and took the battle to the elves. His deeds and the fact that he was from common stock caused him to capture the hearts of the common folk.

Despite his skill in battle, the war raged on for three years. The Suldusk were unified by the battle, were determined to reclaim Wealdath as theirs, and to drive away all human influence. They even managed to rally other elves and fey creatures to their cause.

Ultimately, though, they proved no match for the armies of Tethyr. Malek, who was now a general by this point, led the final assault against the elves. The elves were defeated, many of them fleeing to far corners of the forest or even to lands beyond, whilst others surrendered themselves to Tethyr's mercy.

However, whilst that war ended, another one is slowly brewing. There are some that are saying that they should carry on the attack and wipe out as many elves as possible. Others believe Tethyr has proven its might, that it should expand and reclaim some of its territory. Then there are those that see the war as a sign that the nobility and royalty are obsolete, believe that they should be deposed, by force if need be.

GENERAL MALEK

General Malek Tajan is a well-loved figure by the common folk. He is said to be that which they aspire to. He came from humble origins and, thanks to his hard-work and cunning, was able to rise through the ranks and become a general by the tender age of twenty-four.

His detractors point out he isn't truly from humble origins. He might not be from noble stock, but his wealthy family has been affiliated with them for some time. They are also suspicious of how quickly he rose through the ranks, put it down more to ambition and good connections than genuine skill.

These detractors are usually dismissed as being jealous, especially if they are nobles. However, his detractors have a right to be on edge, as he has the loyalty of both the common folk and much of the military behind him. If he willed it, he could likely rally an army for whatever cause he wanted and few in Tethyr would be able to stop him.

Further complicating this is his relationship with Princess Ysabel. The two of them seem to be engaged in some form of courtship. He is prone to making flowery promises to her about how he will help restore her realm to its full glory. Some interpret this as a sign that he wishes to lead armies against Tethyr's neighbours to take back the land that was once theirs.

SOCIETY

Tethyr is a feudal nation. The common folk are ruled by counts, who appoint local sheriffs from amongst the commoners to administer laws, collect taxes, muster militias and so forth. The counts answer to the dukes, who in turn answer to the Queen. The Queen was once advised by the Royal Privy Council, however the Council has been suspended indefinitely for unknown reasons.

Many are unhappy with this system, though. Tethyr is in a state of increasing unrest. It is struggling to recover from the war its recently fought. Bandit attacks are on the rise, and there seeds of revolution seem to be growing. Many are wondering if the nobility and royalty are obsolete.

It doesn't help that the nobles have recently raised taxes on their subjects. They claim it is to help rebuild infrastructure lost during the war. The common people are unhappy with this though, many of them questioning what the nobles do for them to deserve their hard-earned coin.

Many wealthy merchant families claim that Tethyr should become a mercantile nation like Amn to the north or Calimshan to the south. They claim that the nobility should be cast down and that people should be promoted based on their merits. This is a popular idea amongst the commoners, which has many nobles worried.

Despite the bubbling tension, Queen Anais has been curiously silent on the matter. She has neither moved to intimidate the common folk with a display of force (as her dukes suggest), nor tried to placate them (as others have suggested). With her not providing answers, many have turned to General Malek and Princess Ysabel for solutions.

PRINCESS YSABEL

Ysabel Linden is the niece of Queen Anais, and sole heir to the Tethyrian throne. Her mother was Evonne Linden, the half-sister Queen Anais. Evonne fought with Anais for the throne and failed. She later died under mysterious circumstances, with many believing Queen Anais was involved with her death.

In truth, Evonne had killed herself as part of a ritual to transfer her soul into Ysabel's body. Now controlling her daughter's body, Evonne managed to successfully pass as the young girl for over a decade, all the while manipulating events to attempt to depose Anais.

This plan might have succeeded, if not for the intervention of a group of adventurers in 1480 DR. They managed to expose her Evonne's plot and exorcise her spirit from Ysabel. Since then, Ysabel has managed to recover from the ordeal, and most people have decided to put Evonne's scheme behind them and move on.

The exception to this is Queen Anais. Ever since Evonne's plot was exposed, the queen has acted increasingly cold and distant towards Ysabel. Some claim Queen Anais blames Ysabel for Evonne's actions. Others believe she suspects that Ysabel still isn't entirely herself, is still influenced (partly or entirely) by her mother. There are also those say the suddenness of the revelation led to Queen Anais just becoming more paranoid and distant in general.

Over the past decade, Princess Ysabel has made a name for herself as a sweet-hearted princess. She is kind seen as kind and expressive, unlike her stone-faced aunt. She manages to be popular enough with both the common folk and the nobles. The common folk see her as the leader who could remind the nobility of their obligation, whilst the nobles believe she will send them her aid if a revolution comes.

Her relationship with General Malek adds to the complexity of this situation. Their flowering courtship has captured the hearts and imagination of the common folk, who take it as a sign that the princess values personal merits over noble lineage. Meanwhile, the nobles believe that she is cleverly manipulating General Malek to get him on her side in case revolution should come.

RELIGION

The people of Tethyr care greatly about their land. Land is often equated with status, and thus gods associated with bountiful land (such as Chauntea and Eldath, and Silvanus) are widely worshipped, whilst gods associated with destroying the land (such as Talos) are despised.

Gods that promote knightly or honourable virtues (such as Ilmater, Torm, Tyr and Helm) are also widely worshipped. However, all gods of the Faerûnian Pantheon are worshipped to some extent within Tethyr, even they're only prayed to out of fear.

More recently, cults to Bane, Bhaal and Cyric have been on the rise, most likely in response to all the talk of revolution. These cults generally work on feeding people's fear and anger, stirring up trouble wherever they can. They seek to increase their number and to help bring about a bloody revolution.

SIAMORPHE

Another deity that is sometimes mentioned in Tethyr is Siamorphe, the demigod of nobility. She represents both the Divine Right of nobles, as well as their noble obligation. For a time, she was well-loved in Tethyr. However, as nobles gradually began to fall into their old habits, the common folk's perception of her also waned. How people feel about her now usually depends on how they feel about the nobility.

For clerics wishing to worship her, Siamorphe is a lawful neutral deity. Her holy symbol is a silver chalice and her domains are Knowledge and Light. Her followers are expected to maintain the order set in place by the gods. Nobles are supposed to rule wisely and selflessly. In return for the peace provided by the nobles, commoners are expected to follow the rule of law. Many clerics of Siamorphe are advisors and heralds that work on behalf of a specific noble family.

LOCATIONS IN TETHYR

Tethyr is a very large nation, hence the need to divide it up into duchies and counties. There are many small towns and villages scattered throughout, most of which are overseen by a sheriff. As well as that, Tethyr is home to several major cities, each acting as hubs for different types of activity.

Darromar. The capital of Tethyr. It is from this city that Queen Anais Rhindaun rules. It holds a huge military force, which stands ready to be dispatched to wherever they're needed. Stivan Stariji is the lord mayor of the city, who was appointed by the queen. He is an old, doddering man. Under his watch, the city's criminal underbelly has slowly expanded in size.

Mosstone. A walled town built on Trade Way, near Wealdath. It suffered greatly during the Wealing War, and its revitalisation is still underway. The town used to work closely with nearby druids to protect the forest. However, during the Wealing War, the druids chose to remain neutral, causing ill will between the townsfolk and the druids. The druids are still struggling to overcome this fall from grace in the eyes of the locals.

Myratma. A city to the south of Tethyr, which is as much Calimshan in architecture and feel as it is Tethyr. It is famous across Faerûn for its high-quality textiles. There are also numerous tunnels beneath the city, which are used extensively by the various criminal factions. The deeper tunnels are said to lead to lairs of undead creatures and the remains of ancient efreeti settlements.

Saradush. The gateway between Tethyr and the Lake of Steam, making it a centre for trade in the area. It is also said to be a cursed city, having been destroyed and rebuilt five times in its long history (five being an unlucky number in Tethyr). Despite this, or perhaps because of it, it remains a popular destination for adventurers and travellers.

Riatavin. A former Amnian city. It is run by a group of merchants, the Chosen Council, rather than nobility. It is also home to Shadow Thieves from Amn, "monsters" from Murannidin, and agents from the various factions in Erlkazar. As such, it has a reputation for being a rough, frontier city free from order and proper control.

Zazesspur. Tethyr's largest city and a centre for trade. The city is an amalgam of Tethyrian, Calishite and Amnian influences in terms of architecture and culture. Zazesspur is the former capital of Tethyr, something that the locals aren't keen to let visitors forget any time soon. Many powerful merchants speak openly about the need

to return Tethyr's capital to Zazesspur. Doing so is often a coded way of saying they wish to abolish the royalty and nobility, and to have power handed over to them.

WEALDATH

Wealdath, also known as the Forest of Tethir, is another major location in Tethyr. It is an incredibly large forest. It spans across north-west Tethir, some of Murannin and much of Velen. While many loggers and farmers have made homes on the edges of the forest, the depths of the forest are home exclusively to creatures connected to the Feywild, most notably the elves. The elves of Wealdath are divided into three main tribes: the Elmanesse, the Suldusk and the Lythari.

Elmanesse. A tribe of wood elves that live to the east of Trade Way. They largely keep to themselves, most of the Elmanesse clans remaining neutral during the Wealing War. Many of their homes are hidden amongst the treetops, concealed by magic. The most famous of these is Suldanessellar, which acts as a meeting point and neutral territory for all creatures of the forest.

Suldusk. A tribe of wild elves (sometimes called green elves) that used to have a strong presence on the southern side of Wealdath. Since the Wealing War, though, many of them have scattered and fled further north. They are still struggling to recover from the events of the war. Many are resentful towards the humans of Tethyr; consider the Wealing War the result of an unprovoked attack by the humans.

Lythari. A group of elves with the lycanthropic ability to turn into wolves. They have a strong affinity with the Feywild, have a knack for finding fey crossings within Wealdath. The lythari elves are divided into separate packs, each with their own outlook. During the war, some fought alongside the wild elves, others fought against them, whilst many opted to remain neutral.

ORGANISATIONS

Tethyr is home to much in the way of political intrigue. The royal and noble families have a long history of scheming and fighting amongst themselves, as do the various merchant and criminal organisations. Now, with tension mounting, many of these schemes are colliding, and it's unclear who will wind up on top when the dust settles.

The Nobility. The various dukes, lords and counts of Tethyr rule over the common people. They insist that they perform an important duty of maintaining law and order. The common folk see them as too caught up in their own posturing and political intrigue to be of much help to anyone but themselves.

Merchant Families. Tethyr is home to several powerful merchant families. However, no matter how powerful they are, there are limitations on how much influence they can exert. The nobles say that this is to prevent them from holding an unfair advantage over their competition, whilst the powerful merchants claim that it's yet another limitation the nobles put on the amount of power commoners can hold.

Branch of Linden. Historically, a human-supremacist group that tried to stir up anti-elf sentiments. They were also supporters of Evonne Linden in her bid to depose Queen Anais. More recently, they have been stirring up anti-noble and anti-elf sentiments. They speak at length about the need to get rid of undesirables and to reclaim what is theirs.

Eldreth Veluuthra. An elf-supremacist group, its name meaning "Victorious Blade of the People". They see humans as a blight on Faerûn; seek to eliminate them. They have many agents scattered across Faerûn, some of their number being amongst the elves of Wealdath. They are often subtle in how they dispose of troublesome humans, with several troubles in Tethyr's past being laid at their feet.

KNIGHTLY ORDERS.

Amongst the many organisations within Tethyr are the Knightly Orders. These orders are usually religious in nature. Regardless of their other affiliations or purposes, they are all bound by oaths of allegiance to the queen. In times of need, they are obligated to work alongside Her Majesty's armies to uphold the peace. Of the knightly orders, five of them are the most well-known.

Arvoreen's Marchers. A knightly order made up primarily of gnomes and halflings. They are devoted to protecting the "little folk", which refers to small humanoids, commoners, children and/or the innocent, depending on who one asks. Whilst they stood by their oaths to the queen during the Wealing War, some of them are starting to question their allegiance to the crown.

The Champions Vigilant. A knightly order made up of worshippers of Helm. They are devoted to protect the innocents of Tethyr. They regularly fight off monsters, bandits and other threats to towns and villages. The work they do is often simple yet effective, winning them much respect from the common people.

The Knights Kuldar of Barakmordin. A knightly order made of worshippers of the Triad: Ilmater, Torm and Tyr. They are devoted to healing the sick, helping the weak and avenging those harmed by injustice. However, recent tension between the order's three faiths has made it less effective than it should be.

The Loyal Order of Innocents. A knightly order made up of Torm worshippers. Whilst they helped defend settlements during the Wealing War, they refused to work alongside the armies in attacking the elves; claiming the war as unjust. Nobles now look down on them for breaking their oath to the crown, with many commoners seeing them as cowards and traitors.

The Order of the Silver Chalice. A knightly order devoted to Siamorphe, the demigod of nobility. They believe in the right and responsibility of nobles, with many of its members coming from noble backgrounds. Throughout much of Tethyr's history, they have been widely loved, though with people questioning the importance of nobility, there is some ill will cast towards them. Many revolutionaries see them as potential attack dogs of the nobility. However, others see them as a tool for reminding nobles of their obligation.

RUMOURS & RECENT EVENTS

Tension is mounting in Tethyr. People believe change is coming, but they don't know what sort of change or when. It could be a year away or perhaps a decade. Others believe the time for change is now, all it needs is a spark. As everyone hold their breath in anticipation, there are no shortage of potential sparks.

Nobles Attacked. Recently, there have been rumours of nobles being attacked or going missing whilst travelling or out hunting. These attacks are officially blamed on bandits or monsters or unfortunate circumstance. However, many believe that revolutionaries are responsible for these attacks and disappearances. Many nobles have taken to making sure they are heavily guarded when travelling or hunting.

Emperor Malek. Recently, there have been rumours that General Malek intends to depose Queen Anais and declare himself emperor. These rumours are typically attributed to jealous nobles. However, some nobles have suggested that General Malek started the rumours himself to encourage the idea in the common people's mind and to get a feel for who would support him if he attempted a coup.

Lord Blackthorn. Recently, Lord Blackthorn has been pushing for Tethyr to reclaim the lands of Velen, Erlkazar and Murandinn. Some believe he's trying to play to the crowd, is trying to dispel tension against the nobility by backing popular ideas about expansion and conquest. Despite that, or likely because of that, many other nobles have come out in favour of this idea, are quick to encourage Queen Anais to go to war.

Suldusk Suspicions. There have been rumours of wild elves gathering in Wealdath, surrounding themselves with armies of beasts and fey creatures. Some claim they're just trying to rebuild their tribe after losing the war. Others believe they intend to start

another war. A number of druids have claimed that they intend to leave the Material Plane and enter the Feywild, though that doesn't explain their need for an army.

DM TIPS: ADVENTURING IN TETHYR

Much of the politics in Tethyr has been left deliberately ambiguous. There are many questions presented and very few answers. For example, who is truly to blame for the Wealing War? How do Malek and Ysabel really feel about each other? Are the nobles truly as decadent as the people say, or are tensions merely being played up by one or more factions seeking power?

You may choose to answer these questions however you wish. The questions raised contain an seemingly infinite amount of combinations of possible answers. You may also choose for certain questions to not have clear answers, instead choosing to leave these situations up to personal interpretation.

VELEN

HISTORY

The Velen Peninsula was once part of Tethyr, until 1424 DR, when it declared itself an independent duchy. This caused tension with Tethyr, though much of that tension was smoothed over and the two considered each other allies, at least until recently.

For much of its history as an independent duchy, Velen has been beset by problems. There have been pirates from Nelanther, cut-throat merchants from Amn, as well as the oni of Murannin. Furthermore, Velen seems plagued by monsters and giant beasts.

The most recent trouble is from its own leader, when Duke Calchais began imposing draconian laws and punishments. At first, the citizens tolerated it, but eventually it got so bad that he had to be deposed by a knight of Torm named Theodorn Goodwinter. As a reward, they declared Theodorn the new Duke of Velen.

Few understand why Duke Calchais took such a dark turn. Some blame the pressure of his job. Others believe he was possessed by a dark spirit, a ghost or a demon. Some claim he was a Chosen of Bane. Duke Goodwinter doesn't speak on the matter; grows cold and distant when his predecessor is mentioned in his presence.

DUKE GOODWINTER

Duke Theodorn Goodwinter is a human knight of Torm. He is elderly, with grey hair. He was a retired adventurer by the time he came to Velen, but circumstances drew him into the situation with Duke Calchais where he was eventually forced to kill the despotic ruler.

He had no desire to become duke, and thinks he has set an unfortunate precedent by being made duke after killing the previous duke. He is old and tired of adventure and intrigue, but goes along with being duke out of a sense of duty and a desire to do good.

He is honourable and feels compelled to do the right thing. However, he is also wary and pragmatic at times, knows that others do not share his lofty ideals. For the most part, he has a good knack for telling when people are up to no good or are in it only for themselves. Unfortunately for him, that describes most people he meets of late.

SOCIETY

The people of Velen hold themselves, and others, to high standards. They conduct themselves with honour. They are highly proud and won't stoop to trickery, underhandedness and deceit. They also take a dim view of outsiders, especially adventurers who demand rewards for their services, believe that doing a good deed for Velen should be its own reward.

Duke Goodwinter tends to be more pragmatic attitude than those native to Velen. He knows towns and villages are being threatened by pirates and monsters; knows that the duchy is under constant attack. As such, he's willing to hire out adventurers to thwart Amnian plots or to take down particularly dangerous pirates.

He has also started to hire them to defend smaller, more vulnerable towns and villages. These adventurers are often given official positions (such as mayor, sheriff, or governor) and are compensated appropriately. This hasn't worked out well in some areas, with unscrupulous adventurers quickly abusing their powers; but has worked out wonderfully in others, with

disasters being swiftly averted thanks to the duke's adventurers.

RELIGION

In theory, all non-evil gods of the Faerûn pantheon can be worshipped in Velen, though it is frowned upon to openly worship chaotic gods. The exception to this is the gods associated with storms and seas (Talos, Umberlee, Valkur, etc.) who are worshipped regardless of alignment, if only to appease them.

Worship of Torm is also becoming increasingly common. Worship of Torm was popular even before Duke Goodwinter appeared. Whilst he doesn't go out of his way to encourage worship of Torm, his presence has nevertheless led to an increase in Torm's popularity.

LOCATIONS IN VELEN

Velen has a number of towns and villages, many of which are located along the coastline, though others are located further inland. Most of these settlements are fortified to some extent, to help protect against attacks from monsters and pirates.

Velen. The capital city which gives the peninsula and the duchy its name. It is located in the north-west of Velen. It is the centre of wealth, power, trade and politics within Velen. It is home to many powerful nobles, merchants and visiting dignitaries. Whoever holds the city holds the rest of the peninsula.

Tulmene. A fortified town on the southern side of Velen. It is home to many pirates and criminals. Duke Goodwinter tried placing adventurers in charge of it in the hopes of turning it around, but if anything the adventurers made it worse; quickly established themselves as the heads of crime in the area. Any adventurers sent to replace them have either joined them or wound up dead.

Dragon's Teeth Lagoon. A large lagoon on the western side of Velen. For some reason a large number of ships have been washing up in this lagoon of late. Some attribute it to recent changes in the current, while others insist something more magical is afoot. Regardless, several villages have been set up on nearby shores to plunder the washed-up ships.

ORGANISATIONS

There are many organisations that have an interest in Velen. They are outside forces that believe they can use Velen for their own ends. So far, Duke Goodwinter has done his best to keep Velen free from their influence, however there is only so much that he can do.

Amnian Merchants. Velen is home to many natural resources, though many of them are hard to get at due to the large number of beasts and monsters. The merchants see this as an opportunity to claim the valuable resources for themselves, using a mix of

threats, trickery and bargaining to gain the rights to these resources.

Muranndian Raiders. When Emperor Sothillis put down the Vorrak's Rebellion, many of the orcs that made up the rebellion fled to Velen, where they now raid whatever towns and villages they can. Emperor Sothillis has offered to send in his armies to deal with them, though many suspect that this is just a ploy to establish a military presence in Velen.

The Queen's Lions. A group of Tethyr loyalists who believe Velen should rejoin with Tethyr. Their reasons for doing so vary (some out of loyalty to the crown, others out of fear of Muranndin, and some because they hate being ruled by a foreigner). They operate in cells and are willing to use any number of tactics to achieve their goals.

Nelanther Pirates. The Nelanther Isles are populated by merciless pirates. Goblinoids, orcs, ogres, minotaurs, lizardfolk, humans and more make up the disparate pirate crews. They attack convoys, towns, villages and even each other. Velen, in particular, bears the brunt of their attacks, being so closely located to them.

NELANTHER ISLANDS

The Nelanther Islands exist to the west of Velen. There are many different islands, most of which are too small or seemingly insignificant for most folk to bother keeping track of. However, amongst them are a handful of islands that most locals have heard of.

Brynnlaw. An island that was once controlled by Amn. On it, they built Spellhold, a detention centre for outlaw and insane mages. When Spellhold was closed down, the island soon became abandoned. However, since then, a group of mage pirates have made it home. As well as attacking Amnian ships, they spend most of their time planning expeditions into the trap-infested Spellhold.

Ioma. One of the larger islands. Dominating the island is Mount Ioma, a small mountain containing an abundance of purple crystals. Amnians used to control this island (mining the purple crystals and selling them as faux amethyst) until a recent spike in pirate activities forced them from it. Various pirate crews now fight amongst themselves for control of the island.

Skaug. The only island to have a major settlement. Skaug refers to both the island, and the town. The pirates' port is a rough place, but very welcoming. It is home to many taverns, gambling dens and festhalls. Various sorts of lowlifes can be found here if one is looking to hire some or is hoping to make some kind of shady dealings.

Thordentor. One of the largest islands amongst the Nelanther. It is a place of wild magic. Some attribute this to either the Time of Troubles or the Spellplague, but it is actually due to an experiment of the Twisted Rune gone wrong. There are many tunnels beneath the island, filled with monstrous, malformed creatures. Some claim there is great treasure hidden deep inside the tunnels, but most who visit the island only find doom.

RUMOURS & RECENT EVENTS

Much has been changing recently in Velen. Adventurers, in particular, have been flocking to Velen, following rumours that Duke Goodwinter will offer them power. Velen is caught between lawlessness and order, with many offering to help the young nation, though few having Velen's best interests at heart.

Dark Spirits. Duke Goodwinter has been more irritable of late, has been more harsh when dealing with criminals. While some put this down to the stress he's been under, others whisper that this is how things started with Duke Calchais. Whilst it's entirely possible that Duke Goodwinter could simply be a bad mood, some can't help but wonder if he's under the influence of some kind of curse or dark spirit which will slowly transform the well-loved leader into a tyrannical despot.

Admiral Fleetwell. Fed up with the pirate attacks, Admiral Fleetwell is determined to conquer the Nelanther Isles in the name of Velen. He plans to go through the islands, starting with the weakest pirate clans, and working his way up until they are all brought to heel. However, for his plan to work, he needs many brave adventurers to volunteer on his mission. Unfortunately, most adventurers consider it a suicide mission and so give him a wide berth.

Dinosaur Attacks. There have long since been rumours of dinosaurs within Velen. Most dismissed these as fanciful rumours. However, when a town was recently wiped out, the marks left behind and the stories from the survivors confirm that this was indeed the work of dinosaurs. Duke Goodwinter has sent adventurers to hunt the dinosaurs down. However, some wish to know where these dinosaurs came from and how many more are out there.

Mawsouth. Recently, it has been discovered that the shells of the sea snails unique to a certain shore can be used to create a highly valuable dye. A nearby town is already working on harvesting the shells and producing the dye, but Duke Goodwinter fears outsiders will try to seize control of the dye production. As such, he is looking for adventurers he can trust to protect the town.

DM TIPS: ADVENTURING IN VELEN.

The Duchy of Velen is a young and vulnerable nation, which can serve as a perfect place to base an entire campaign. The PCs will likely start out by being put in charge of a small settlement. As they fight off various threats and help the settlement grow in size and importance, their influence will begin to spread across all of Velen. As such, they will not only have to contend with threats to their settlement, but to Velen itself.

From there, they will raise in prestige and rank. Their actions will likely decide the entire future of Velen. Do they make alliances with various outside forces, or do they try to strengthen Velen without outside influence? As Velen prospers, they are then left with the question of what to do with all their power. Are they content in the power that they wield, or are they interested in spreading their influence across all of the Lands of Intrigue?

FOLK OF INTRIGUE

THE HARPERS

Likely one of the most famous secret organisations in Faerûn, as contradictory as that might sound. They are famed in legend, with many events and heroic deeds being ascribed to them. Many of these stories are wildly inaccurate, giving a grossly misleading view of how the Harpers operate.

The Harpers often operate as lone operatives or in small cells. They work to oppose corruption, injustice, and strife. They also seek to preserve history and knowledge, as well as maintain a balance between the various powers. They are often subtler and more secretive than many of the stories about them would have most folk believe.

This is especially true in the Lands of Intrigue, where they are not as widely loved as they are in the lands to the north. Most folk think of them as meddling outsiders and the various powerful organisations are vigilant for signs of their activity. As such, the Harpers are even more subtle than usual; often indirectly manipulating others into carrying out their plans.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE SHIELD

A loose network of nobles and merchants from across the Sword Coast and the Lands of Intrigue. Broadly-speaking, it exists to give its members a certain edge in trading. Not only is it a good place to strike profitable deals, but it is also a good place to hear useful rumours. Many of its members also feel a sense of camaraderie towards its fellow members, seeing the group as a brotherhood of like-minded people.

However, the Knights of the Shield hold a more sinister side; the Shield Council. This is the secret inner circle of the Knights of the Shield, which few within the Knights of the Shield have even heard of. It has seven members, which work to manipulate the Knights of the Shield and, by extension, all of Faerûn.

The Shield Council is, in turn, led by the Hidden Lord. The Hidden Lord (also known as the Hidden Lord of the Shield, and the Shield of the Hidden Lord) is an intelligent magic shield. It speaks to the Shield Council, offering them effective advice and tantalising secrets. Under its leadership, the Knights of the Shield have flourished and those within the Shield Council have prospered immensely.

LEGEND OF GARGAUTH.

Long ago, Gargauth was an archdevil, however he was considered too chaotic for Hell and was thus exiled to the Material Plane. There he managed to gather a following, eventually elevating himself to the position of demigod.

As a demigod, he came up with numerous plans to spread corruption and greed. One plan involved placing a piece of his essence inside a shield and letting it fall into the hands of the Shield Council. Through the shield, he spoke to them and advised them, never revealing who he truly was. Eventually, the shield became the undisputed ruler of the Shield Council; became known as the Hidden Lord of the Shield.

Gargauth continued to grow in power, however his ambition soon got the better of him. Hearing rumours that Asmodeus was weakened, he decided to usurp his position as Lord of the Nine Hells. Unfortunately, his attack turned out to be poorly timed and Asmodeus proved too much for him; was able to kill him with ease.

Most assume Gargauth was completely destroyed during this encounter, however a piece of him managed to survive within the Hidden Lord. Having lost his divinity and much of his power, he now manipulates the Knights of the Shield into restoring him to his full power. As well as the Knights of the Shield, Gargauth also has a small number of agents and warlocks scattered throughout the realms who aid him in his quest for godhood.

MAZTICAN INSURGENTS

The colonisation of Maztica was never exactly easy. As well as being full of hidden treasure, the continent was also full of hidden dangers. There was also the matter of the local tribes, who often objected to Faerûn's incursion into their land. However, for the most part, they were unable to resist the colonisation of their land.

With Maztica having recently returned to the world of Toril, it seems as though the continent is once more ripe for plunder. However, it seems the continent has had time to prepare for their return to Toril. Maztican agents have been spotted across western Faerûn, weaving plots to destabilise the major powers and to regain their lost treasures.

It's unclear how much these agents are working together, if at all. Some seem to be hunting for any and all treasure taken from Maztica. Others seem more interested in only specific treasures. Some simply seek to prevent the colonisation of their land. Others seek to punish everyone and anyone that has benefited from Maztica's colonisation.

MAZTICA.

Maztica is a continent that exists for to the west of Faerûn, across the Trackless Sea. It is a continent covered in jungles and populated by many different tribes. It is also a place of many treasures and untapped resources.

It was "discovered" by Amn in 1361 DR, who immediately saw the opportunity that this New World offered. Parts of Maztica were taken over and colonised by Amn. Other powers from across Faerûn also got involved; including Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate and Tethyr.

The colonisation of the continent was cut short when Maztica was cast from Toril to the world of Abeir. For a century it remained there, cut off from the influence of Faerûn. It's only recently, in 1486 DR, that Maztica returned to Faerûn.

Amn was quick to re-establish its colonies, with other nations being more cautious. They didn't know how much Maztica had changed and whether or not the continent would be whisked away again. For now, though, the continent seems to be here to stay. As for how much the continent has changed, that remains to be seen.

SHOON VII

Once a powerful emperor, Shoon VII has since been transformed into a dream spirit. As a dream spirit, he is able to visit the dreams of mortal creatures and reshape them to his will.

Additionally, by bombarding a creature with nightmares, he can wear down the creature's psychic defences, allowing him to possess that creature's body.

Shoon seeks to rule over the Lands of Intrigue, as he did long ago. He believes that the best way to achieve his goal is to unite the Lands of intrigue under a single, all-powerful ruler who he can then possess.

As such, Shoon is busy using his dream magic to manipulate events across the Lands of Intrigue. He is also working to eliminate (or take control of) those he considers a threat to his rule. This especially includes the Twisted Rune, who he is careful to avoid drawing the attention of until he's ready to deal with them.

LEGEND OF SHOON VII.

Over a thousand years ago, Shoon VII was the head of the Shoon Imperium, which ruled over the entirety of the Lands of Intrigue. As well as being an emperor, Shoon VII was also a highly accomplished mage. Using his powers, he was able to transform himself into a lich. However, unknown circumstances led to him devolving into a demilich and eventually being bound within an artefact of his own creation, the Tome of the Unicorn.

He was eventually freed from the book (in part due to the wild magic created by the Time of Troubles) and wound up in the body of a young elf woman named Zallanora. With his new form, he set about trying to take control of the Lands of Intrigue once more. He gained himself a position amongst the Cowled Wizards, set about amassing power and prestige.

Unfortunately, all of this was cut short with the coming of the Spellplague. For unknown reasons, the Spellplague caused Shoon's elven body to burst into blue flames, destroying it. Rather than dying, though, Shoon found himself being cast into the Region of Dreams (also known as the Demiplane of Nightmares, the Dream Ethereal, and the Veil of Sleep).

Losing his physical body was a major setback, but he soon learnt how to use his new powers. He could visit the dreams of those on the Material Plane, could shape them how he wished. He could also possess certain people, allowing him to walk around in the waking world. If these bodies were ever killed or he was forced out of them, he would wind up back in the Region of Dreams.

For almost a century, Shoon has been slowly manipulating the political situation in the Lands of Intrigue (using a mix of dream manipulation and possessing important people). From the looks of the Lands of Intrigue, it may seem as though he's far from achieving his goals, but looks can be deceiving. Furthermore, he is an unageing spirit; has all the time in the world to achieve his ambitions.

THE TWISTED RUNE

A cabal of liches and other powerful undead spellcasters. They plan to covertly take control of the Lands of Intrigue and even lands beyond. This typically involves getting their agents into positions of power within influential families and organisations.

The Twisted Rune is divided into several levels of power. At the top are the nine Runemasters. Beneath them is the inner circle, made up of Runemasters' apprentices and disciples. Beneath them is the outer circle, many of which don't even know the name of the organisation they serve. Beneath them numerous pawns and unwitting agents who don't even realise they serve a larger organisation.

Very few organisations work to oppose the Twisted Rune, largely because so few even know they exist. Despite that, they hold far less power than they'd like. The chaotic nature of the Lands of Intrigue, combined with the various internal schisms between the Runemasters, has caused them several setbacks. Fortunately for them, they have all the time in the world to work away and bring the realms under their control.

THE RUNEMASTERS.

The Twisted Rune is ruled by nine Runemasters. The individuals comprising the Runemasters has changed over time. Rysellen the Dark was once the leader of the Twisted Rune, but was destroyed by jealous subordinates. Priamon "Frostrune" Rakesk, once a respected Runemaster, was disposed of after his ambition got the better of him. Most recently, a Runemaster by the name of Kartak Spellseer disappeared under mysterious circumstance, with some believing that he was drawn into the Demiplane of Dread. Each time an old Runemaster falls, a lesser member of the Twisted Rune is promoted to replace them. Below are six of the nine current Runemasters.

Rhangaun. A human lich with over a thousand years experience in wizardry. As such, he is highly skilled when it comes to magic, even by the high standards of other liches. He is the head of the Runemasters' Council; leads the rest of the Runemasters in their plans to spread their influence across the Lands of Intrigue.

Jymahna the Silver. A human mummy lord. She has mastered arcane magic in place of divine magic, causing many to mistake her for a lich. She encourages this confusion and many more misconceptions about her. She is a master of enchantments, illusions and sand-based magic; wears a silver funerary mask which is said to possess any number of magical properties. She is skilled at weaving webs of intrigue and has a large number of intelligence-gathering agents.

Ralayn the Occultacle. A mind flayer lich (also known as an illithilich) who was only recently been raised to the position of Runemaster. He is still adjusting to his new position and knows he isn't entirely trusted by his fellow Runemasters. He is especially wary of Shyressa, who seems to have a personal dislike towards him. His main strength is his ability to imbue his wizardry with psionic energy, making certain spells more effective.

Sapphiraktar the Blue. An ancient blue dracolich. His magic allows him to appear as a living dragon. He has many different aliases, an incredibly vast network of agents, as well as a plethora of powerful magical items at his disposal. He sees Jymahna as his rival, as their networks of agents frequently clash. He has also taken an interest in mentoring Shyressa, believing her natural skill at creating new spells is a sign of her possessing draconic heritage.

Shangalar the Black. A tiefling lich. He has been made Rhangaun's unofficial second-in-command, largely thanks to his tremendous magical power and relative lack of ambition. His largest flaw is his utter paranoia, which causes him to squander his energies preparing for elaborate attacks and betrayals that never come. He used to be closer with Jymahna but, as her ambition grows, their relationship wanes.

Shyressa Darkflame. A human vampire. She tends to be the least serious of the group. She enjoys playing games of cat and mouse with her opponents; sees all of the intrigue of the Twisted Rune as a game to enjoy. She is a powerful archmage, but not quite as powerful as most of her fellow Runemasters. She makes up for it, though, with the arsenal of unique spells she created. Many of these spells include conjuring dark flames for a variety of purposes, hence the title "Darkflame".

THE ZHENTARIM

The Black Network is a seemingly benign group. It is a mercenary company, offering the best escorts, bodyguards and soldiers that one could hope to find. However, beneath the surface, they are trying to manipulate events and gain an iron-fisted monopoly over the mercenary trade, making all dependent on them.

Its members form a brotherhood of sorts, watching out for each other, whilst trying to expand the influence of the Zhentarim. However, they also enjoy a great deal of autonomy and many hold independent ambition, which can cause internal strife.

Across much of Faerûn, the Zhentarim go to great lengths to hide their ambitious and the more sinister side of their activities. This isn't as necessary in much of the Lands of Intrigue, where ruthlessness and ambition can often be seen as virtues. Instead, the only problem in the Lands of Intrigue is the more powerful and more deeply entrenched organisations that get in the way of them maintaining a proper foothold.